



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



VABHHCS TO HOST PCT WOMEN'S RETREAT

The specialized Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Outpatient Treatment Program (PCT) of the VA Black Hills Health Care System is hosting its semi-annual women's retreat April 27, 28, 29, 2012. The retreat will be held at the Fort Meade Campus, two miles east of Sturgis.

The PCT staff takes a holistic approach to veteran's treatment and addresses psychological, physical, social and spiritual issues related to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The semi-annual women's retreats were developed as part of the VA's rural health care initiative, "serving the under-served".

The semi-annual weekend retreat, beginning at 12pm on April 27th, is for women veterans of all eras diagnosed with PTSD and family members (wives, significant others, mothers, adult daughters, etc.) of male veterans diagnosed with PTSD. The weekend retreats offer a condensed psycho educational, experiential format that educates participants of the debilitating symptoms of PTSD, effects on the family, with a particular emphasis on developing healthier coping strategies and increasing one's social support network.

"The PCT Women's Retreat in its 18th year, seeks to help participants examine some of the basic questions in their lives," said Cathy Edler, Addiction Therapist for the PCT Program and Retreat Coordinator. "The volunteer facilitators and participants build a community of people who are willing to take time to support each other. The retreat does not have your answers, but will provide the time, place and personal support for you to search within yourself."

The Disabled American Veterans Charitable Trust (DAV) has graciously bestowed a yearly grant for the retreat program. This funding helps to cover meals and lodging expenses for all eligible participants.

Seating is limited to 35 participants and is on a first come, first served basis. Participants must be screened and pre-register by phoning the PCT Program at 720-7449 or 1-800-743-1070, extension 7449.

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**Black Hills
Health Care System**
Department of Veterans Affairs



VOW TO HIRE HEROES ACT

The Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (enacted Nov. 21) provides an expanded Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) for businesses that hire eligible unemployed veterans and, for the first time, makes the credit available to certain tax-exempt organizations.

The credit can be as high as \$9,600 per veteran for for-profit employers or up to \$6,240 for tax-exempt organizations. The amount of the credit depends on a number of factors, including the length of unemployment period before hiring, hours worked and the amount of first-year wages paid. Employers who hire veterans with service-related disabilities may be eligible for the maximum credit. The credit is available to qualified employers, including qualified tax-exempt organizations that hire qualified veterans before January 1, 2013. So the credit may be available for tax years 2011, 2012 and 2013, depending on when the qualified veteran is hired.

For more information, including how to claim the credit, go to [IRS.gov](http://www.irs.gov). In the Search box use the following search terms; Work Opportunity Tax Credit or VOW to Hire Heroes Act.

For more information, click on this link to the IRS.gov, [Expanded Work Opportunity Tax Credit Available for Hiring Qualified Veterans](http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=253949,00.html) (<http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=253949,00.html>)

There are extensive employment resources available for Veterans provided by the Federal Government. Visit <http://www.fedshirevets.gov/> and the Department of Labor's <http://www.dol.gov/vets> to learn more.



SD GUARD UNIT WILL MOBILIZE FOR DEPLOYMENT

The South Dakota Army National Guard's 927th Survey and Design Team, of Sioux Falls, has received their official mobilization order for deployment to Kuwait in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The 927th and its 14 assigned members are scheduled for deployment in July.

The mission of the 927th is to plan, conduct, prepare and provide planning studies and tests for identified engineer work projects. They also provide guidance, legal descriptions, certification and surveys for engineer projects.

The unit will report to Fort Bliss, Texas, to complete several weeks of theater specific training prior to deployment overseas. This is the unit's first deployment.



SECURE MESSAGING—NEW OPTION FOR VETERANS

Veterans who receive primary care services at VA Black Hills Health Care System can now take advantage of a new way to communicate with their health care teams that's as fast as email, but completely safe and secure! The new communication tool is called "Secure Messaging" and allows veterans to communicate electronically with their primary care team in VA Black Hills Health Care System.

"Secure Messaging is a great communication tool for anything, but urgent communication," said Deann Arneson, My Health^eVet coordinator at Black Hills. "It is meant for routine communication such as questions about appointments, prescriptions or other non-urgent health care matters," Arneson said. "We also plan to expand Secure Messaging to specialty care areas soon." She added that Secure Messaging helps veterans avoid long hold times on the telephone or missed phone calls from their health care team.

To take advantage of Secure Messaging veterans should create an account on My Health^eVet (www.myhealth.va.gov), making sure to check both VA patient and veteran when they register. Next, follow the In-Person Authentication link and complete the in-person authentication form.

"Veterans can complete the form at home and drop it off during their next visit or they can complete the form at the VA hospitals in Hot Springs, Fort Meade or any of our community-based outpatient clinics," Arneson said. After the form is completed, it will take a few days for the veteran to be authenticated. Veterans can tell their account has been authenticated if they can view their VA appointments and VA lab results on My Health^eVet – these are some of the site's other enhanced features available to Veterans who complete the authentication process.

Once the authentication is completed veterans should login to their My Health^eVet account, click on Secure Messaging and 'Opt-in', which is agreeing to the terms and conditions of Secure Messaging. "Opting-in only takes a moment, but it's a very important step because it opens up a new form of safe and secure two-way communication between veterans and their health care teams," Arneson said. She added that by Opting-in now, veterans will have more control over their VA health care and will have Secure Messaging ready when they need it.

For more information about Secure Messaging and the many features of My Health^eVet, contact Deann Arneson at (605) 745.2000, extension 2060 or at deann.arneson@va.gov. Veterans are reminded not to send any personal information when communicating via email.



VETERAN AND RETIREE BENEFITS SUMMIT

Military veterans and retirees who would like to know more about benefits and the services available to themselves and their family may plan on attending one of the Military Veteran and Retiree Benefits Summit sessions in northwest South Dakota communities.

The Northern Hills session will be Thursday, April 5, at 7 p.m. at the Spearfish Armory at the Young Center on the Black Hills State University campus in Spearfish. The armory is headquarters for the 842nd Engineer Co. that currently is deployed for service in Afghanistan and has platoons in Belle Fourche and Sturgis. Veterans and retirees of all military branches are encouraged to attend.

The summit will include brief presentations followed by opportunities for attendees to meet individually with representatives to discuss specific questions and concerns such as TRICARE, retirement and survivor benefits as well as veteran entitlements. The summit is hosted by the South Dakota National Guard, S.D. Department of Veterans Affairs and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Other Northwest South Dakota sessions include:

- Tuesday, April 3 at 7 p.m.—American Legion Post (1st Avenue West) Lemmon
- Wednesday, April 4 at 9 a.m., National Guard Armory (1211 Lakefront Road) Mobridge
- Wednesday, April 4 at 7 p.m., Cheyenne River Motel (Highways 212 and 63) Eagle Butte.



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS



DARE TO DREAM CONFERENCE

The 2012 Dare to Dream Conference, coordinated by the South Dakota Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities, will be held June 10-12, 2012, at the Holiday Inn in Spearfish.

The South Dakota Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities (COALITION) is a grass-roots, statewide, disability advocacy organization that was started in the 1980s by a group of committed people who envisioned the difference that could be made by working together on behalf of all people with disabilities. The Coalition of Citizens believes in the inclusion of all people into all aspects of society, and everyone should have the freedom of choice to pursue their own quality of life.

Information about the conference and registration materials can be found on their website at:

<http://www.sdparent.org/web/index.php?siteid=2825&pageid=22670>



MILLER TO LEAVE FALL RIVER COUNTY

Paul Miller, Fall River County VSO has notified the Fall River County Commission that he will be leaving his position with the County effective April 20th.

We at the Department wish Paul the very best and sincerely thank him for his commitment to South Dakota Veterans.

Upcoming Events

Apr. 2—Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial—VA Black Hills Cemetery
Apr. 3— Veteran/Retiree Summit—Lemmon American Legion—7:00 pm
Apr. 4— Veteran/Retiree Summit—Mobridge National Guard Armory—9:00 am
Apr. 4— Veteran/Retiree Summit—Cheyenne River Motel—Eagle Butte—7:00 pm
Apr. 5— Veteran/Retiree Summit—Spearfish Armory—7:00 pm
Apr. 27-29—VABHHCS Women's Retreat—Fort Meade
Apr. 28—Military Order of the Purple Heart State Convention—Rapid City
May 11-13—DAV 73rd Annual Department of SD Convention—Brookings
May 12—60th Anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration Display—Brookings
May 16—Vietnam Veterans of America State Convention—Pierre
May 21-22—South Dakota Veterans Commission Meeting—Pierre
Jun. 7-10—VFW State Convention—Brookings
Jun. 9—Marine Corps League Department of SD Convention—Pierre
Jun. 10-12—Dare to Dream Conference—Spearfish Holiday Inn
Jun. 14-17—American Legion State Convention—Watertown
Aug. 27-29—VSO Annual Benefits School—Pierre

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